UNILEVER’S POSITION ON SALT REDUCTION

Background

A diet containing excess salt (sodium) can lead to raised blood pressure, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke. The World Health Organization recommends adults limit their daily intake to 5g. The main sources of salt vary from one country to the next but the main sources of salt are bread, cheese, processed meat, soups, sauces and savoury snacks. We are reducing the amount of salt in key products right across our portfolio, in an effort to help consumers meet the World Health Organization (WHO) daily salt intake recommendation of 5g.

In 2003, Unilever created the Nutrition Enhancement Programme and we continue to assess our entire food and beverage product portfolio on an ongoing basis to help plan nutritional improvements.

Context

By the end of 2010, we had reduced salt levels in our products to an interim target level of 6g per day. This required salt reductions of up to 25%.

As part of the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan, our ambition is to further reduce salt levels. By 2020, 75% of our Foods portfolio will meet salt levels to enable intakes of 5g per day. In 2013, 55% of our Foods portfolio was already compliant with the 5g target.

Unilever’s position

Unilever supports salt reduction strategies in which government agencies, NGOs, academics, media and the food industry collaborate – as necessary – to develop the following initiatives:

- Voluntary food reformulation programmes with absolute targets for salt levels defined for each product category
- Gradual reduction of salt to help consumers adjust to a less salty taste and prevent them from simply adding more salt at the table
- Consumer awareness/education campaigns developed and led by government agencies or NGOs
- External monitoring systems put in place and led by government agencies

We also believe consumer acceptance should be identified as a key success factor in any salt reduction strategy. Great-tasting products will have the most impact because consumers will not give up taste for health.